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SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: "TRANSFORMATION WITH VIOLENCE" MOST LIKELY

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Summary
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¶1. (SBU) The largest daily newspaper in La Paz ran a three page story over the weekend based on interviews with political figures. The article identified five possible outcomes to the current political stalemate from "Dialogue and Peaceful Transformation" to "Civil War." According to the panel, "Transformation with Violence" is the most likely scenario. On the heels of Evo's 67 percent victory in the August 10 recall vote, politicians from the ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) were the most optimistic, indicating that the popular will would eventually prevail and bring national unity. Figures from the opposition were more pessimistic and resigned to the inevitability of political violence. However, only one senator from the eastern state of Beni thought that civil war was the most likely outcome.

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The Survey Says
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¶2. (SBU) The daily newspaper La Razon identified five possible outcomes of the current political impasse in Bolivia: Dialogue and Peaceful Transformation, Non-Resolution and Permanent Conflict, Transformation with Violence, Confrontation, or Civil War. The most likely scenario, according to a panel of political figures was Transformation with Violence with an average score of 5.2 on a scale of 1-10. The second most likely resolution was "Dialogue and Peaceful Transformation" with a score of 3.8.

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Our Vision is Bolivia's Vision
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¶3. (SBU) In separate write-up with the participants, it become clear that figures from the MAS are confident that their vision is shared by the majority of Bolivians and that only a handful of radical and reactionary fringe elements stand in their way. As a result, the government's vision will ultimately prevail and, because of its inevitability, opposition forces are likely to relent without any serious violence. For example, the Minister of Government Alfredo Rada argued that ultimately those who support "national unity, the deepening of democracy, the culmination of the constitutional and (regional) autonomy process" will prevail.

While there is turmoil in the county currently, it comes only from "radical civic leaders and opposition prefects (governors)" from marginal areas in the Chaco (south-east) and the jungle (north-east). For Rada, the heart of the nation and largest economic and social centers are currently at peace, operating normally, and will ultimately prevail over the rough fringes of society.

14. (SBU) The head of the MAS congressional delegation, Cesar Navarro mirrored Rada's thinking. He said that the "liberal, republican, and neocolonial state has failed and has to be transformed" and asserted that Bolivia now has "a democratic leadership that has transcended continental boundaries and has an unassailable strength for the transformation and unity of the country." For Navarro, it is a lie that the country is divided and on the border of a civil war; all will be resolved peacefully via democratic participation.

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My Vision Ain't Your Vision
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15. (SBU) Figures from the opposition were not so sanguine about a united Bolivia, nor about a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Reflecting two years of failed attempts to dialogue with the Morales administration, the two prefects interviewed for the article both expressed hope for dialogue, but a firm belief that current push to approve the MAS

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constitution needed to be stopped. Leopoldo Fernandez, the Prefect of Pando said that "the government doesn't want to admit that the root of the current problems is in the process of constitutional reform" and currently, the proposed constitution "does not reflect a true social pact for Bolivians." As a result, both he and also Tarija's opposition Prefect, Mario Cossio see violence as a probability to force the government to admit to the divisions in the country and take seriously any dialog.

16. (SBU) Most pessimistic among the interviewees was the Podemos Senator from Beni, Walter Guitera. For him, civil war is now inevitable as Bolivians from the east ask "why are we going to belong to this country?" In the front of their minds are the arguments that "we are not at all like the west (of Bolivia), not in topography, not racially, not in our manner of thinking, and not in our culture." The divisions between east and west have always been present, but for many the current state of affairs has brought the differences into sharp contrast.
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